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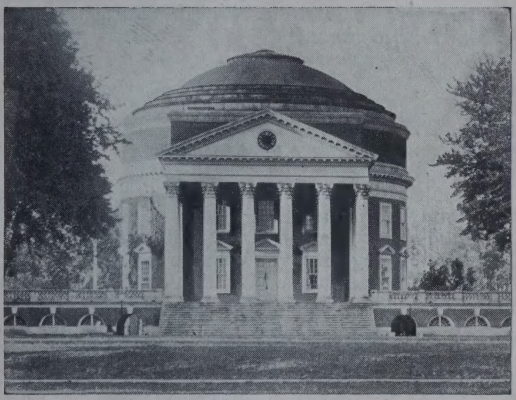
1929

The INSTITUTE of PUBLIC AFFAIRS

As Seen by Some Editors



The Rotunda

Session of 1929

UNIVERSITY of VIRGINIA

The following editorial comments indicate the attitude of the press toward the Institute of Public Affairs. During the 1929 session 170 leading newspapers in 34 states carried editorials, most of them several times.

THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

The third annual session of the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, which starts the first week in August, promises to bring many Washingtonians to the lovely old campus under the shadow of Monticello.

There they will join in dispassionate discussions of the outstanding economic and social issues now before the country. Dr. Charles G. Maphis, dean of the Summer School, is arranging for this year an exceptionally rich and varied program. Last Summer the meetings of the institute were somewhat overshadowed by the political campaign then in progress, but this year they will be free to spread over a wider range of topics of current interest.

Two subjects to which round tables will be devoted for the entire period should be of especial interest—the crime situation and the rural church. On the former subject, under the direction of one of the Nation's foremost scientific criminologists, an effort will be made to present all the antagonistic viewpoints. For the discussions on the country

church Dean Maphis has enlisted leaders of all the outstanding denominations.

The Institute of Public Affairs is modeled somewhat on the older and better known institute at Williamstown, but its range is restricted to domestic questions. Its discussions seldom cross the boundaries of the United States. Because of this narrowed field, a more intensive consideration is possible.

The round table on the crime situation should cover much the same ground as is covered in the discussions and studies of President Hoover's Crime Commission. The social, psychiatric, religious, racial and economic phases of the apparently increasing lawlessness will be analyzed and some of the popular fallacies, the result of loose thinking and insufficient information, will be exposed. A saner viewpoint should result.

The Institute of Public Affairs has no theories of its own to advance. It has no party to serve. Its sole object is to make possible a lucid, dispassionate, intellectual understanding of all schools of thought on the subjects under discussion.—**Washington (D. C.) Star,** July 21, 1929.

THE INSTITUTES.

With the approach of the month of August one is reminded of the more weighty side of life. The Institute of Politics opens its ninth annual session at Williamstown on August 1; the younger Institute of Public Affairs convenes upon the pleasant campus of the University of Virginia on the 4th. The papers will soon be diversified with those long, those slightly serious and frequently informative reports of their proceedings which have come to distinguish the late summer. It is a time of year in which statesmen and politicians take their vacations, in which few things happen, and which is peculiarly suitable to the

leisurely review of the major problems of public policy and contemporary history.

The Williamstown institute, founded in the first flush of our post-war enthusiasm for international relations, has always turned its face abroad, though it is symptomatic that the problems which it discusses have latterly come to do as much with Latin-American and Pacific relations as with Europe. Its program this year covers both hemispheres, but with a particular emphasis on economic as distinct from political issues. The Charlottesville institute, which was founded three years ago, emphasizes the domestic problems of the United States, and its discussions are sometimes of a more actively controversial nature. This year it is debating prohibition and public utilities, as well as such less burning, though perhaps no less interesting, questions as the position of American rural life and the ship canal from the Great Lakes.

The success of these two institutes, as well as the many lesser ones founded in this country upon the Williamstown model, seems to demonstrate that they have met a need in the American mind. They have not grown into meeting grounds for statesmen, diplomats and industrial leaders, as some rather rashly expected that they might. But they have become forums where men whose opinions are entitled to respect can address a responsive audience and through the newspapers, a wider audience scattered over the country. For those who attend them they constitute an instructive and interesting experience; for those who do not, they reflect the currents of informed opinion on our national policies, show what problems are under most active debate by the thoughtful, and often bring to light suggestions and considerations which otherwise might lie con-

New York Herald-Tribune, July 22nd, 1929.

ABOUT IT AND ABOUT

Since almost always in man's history action has been preceded and suggested by talk, lovers of action and decision need not turn up their noses at the Summer institutes in which the great, the near-great and the aspiring discuss questions of public importance. The exact tangible results of the Institute of Politics convoked at Williams College each Summer could not be set down by any system of accountancy, but that it has formed useful and abiding links between leaders of thought in many nations can hardly be doubted. Another and older American college—the University of Virginia—has established a Summer round-table, and this year (from Aug. 4 until Aug. 17) amid some of the most beautiful of the shades of academe there will float upon the airs of Jefferson's County of Albemarle many thoughts on many subjects.

Among the speakers on the questions which Congress itself often discusses without any more action than the University of Virginia's Institute of Public Affairs can give will be Senators Glass, Walsh of Massachusetts, Connally and George, and Norman Thomas. Journalism will be represented in part by the retired Victor Rosewater, once of Omaha, and Sherwood Anderson, torn from the despairing clutch of literature to become a Virginia country editor. The vice chairman of the Federal Tariff Commission, Mr. Dennis, will be heard. Commissioner Doran of the Prohibition Department, Professor Myers of Princeton, and Dr. William E. Dodd, the historian, are on the program.

Those who enjoy contact with authorities of ready speech and wish to open the windows of their mental interests should find August at Charlottesville very stimulating.—**New York Times,** July 22, 1929.

NOTABLE INSTITUTE.

* * * This attests the favor with which the Institute is regarded. The experiment undertaken a few years ago has proven highly successful and attracts to its sessions each season leaders of thought and action in many lines. Its proceedings and reports are educational and informing as they cover a wide variety of subjects.—**Bristol (Conn.) Press,** July 27, 1929.

INSTITUTES OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

The Williamstown Institute of Politics will open tomorrow morning and the Institute of Public Affairs of the University of Virginia will begin its meetings Sunday. While necessarily restricted in their attendance, these sessions are provided with a very generous sounding board in the care with which the press reports them. And well they merit press attention; the success of each has been gratifying, and each deserves the heartiest support of those who believe that democracy actually will work.

For it is a truism to say that democracy proceeds from an informed citizenry and that without a citizenry of that kind democracy is impossible. It is significant that an age which more than any other sees the influence of the plain people of the several world powers brought heavily to bear upon the diplomacy of their dealings with each other, is also the age whose technique of communication is most highly developed. The two things go together; open covenants openly arrived at can only serve—and be sought by —a generally informed populace.

Yet the press can only act as the vehicle of information and is strictly limited in its function as an originator of it. This it must generally leave to the scholars, the research workers, the experts in all the manifold fields

of human endeavor. Such meetings as those next month at Williamstown and the University of Virginia furnish the rostrum upon which such scholarship may be heard. * * * —**New Haven (Conn.) Jrnl. Cour.,** July 31st, 1929.

THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Today the Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia closes a session that has been marked by brilliant public service. At a period when news is traditionally dull and political thought is more than usually quiescent, the institute has made thousands pause to consider the pressing and essential problems of government. This is no small feat, for, as Norman Thomas said, in his address to the institute: "Men are incurably lazy, and fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth—not death or hell—for, if men had thought more there would have been less hell."

Every advance in thinking has been a gain for self-directed government, and the addresses and discussions at the University of Virginia have arrested the attention of a national audience. The dominant papers of the United States have featured these meetings, and **The News Leader,** in conjunction with WRVA, broadcast the evening discussions.

Not even the ages of geology move more slowly than men's attitude towards old and habituated trains of thought. The slow strength custom cannot easily be deflected, but, as a result of these conferences, Virginia will necessarily have a new and better and more courageous attitude to a number of essential problems. In business the state has received information about its forests and fisheries that can be made worth millions every year. In education, in religion, in government the opinions and experiences of men of light and lead-

ing have been freely offered for the help and guidance of this commonwealth.

These theories have been openly subjected to the fire of free debate, in which they were tried by the acid test of free discussion, and the audiences were accustomed to the difficult, but essential, task of learning through debate to abandon old ways and accept new ideas. It is this step towards a more receptive attitude of mind on the part of the public that is the greatest gain of all.—**Richmond (Va.) News Leader,** August 17, 1929.

THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

The third Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia closed Saturday. Official announcement is that the average attendance at the round tables, open forum discussions and evening meetings was 1,334, with a registration of 1,042 members from thirty-four states and eight foreign countries. Dean Maphis, in giving out the figures, called attention to the fact that there were 142 invited speakers on this year's program, including 21 evening speakers, 27 invited to participate in open forum debates, and 85 to take part in round table discussions.

"Never before in the history of the Institute," said Dr. Maphis, "has such careful preparation been manifest in all of the addresses as has been shown almost without exception this year. The proceedings of the Institute," he said, "will constitute one of the most authoritative collections of current opinion on national topics anywhere assembled."

Two years ago the first Institute was opened with but a limited number of speakers, and with a considerable uncertainty as to the attendance. Year by year the interest has grown and the attendance increased.

Many thoughtful people now plan their vacations to go by the University for at least a part of the time of the Institute, and to listen in on the debates of topics of timely interest by men and women who are well informed as to various phases.

Already plans are being made for the fourth annual Institute to be held next summer from August 3, to August 16. Dean Maphis is already discussing the general plan of round table conferences and selecting some of the subjects to which special attention will be given. As an opportunity for a free discussion of National, State and local questions from many points of view, and for a ventilation of all phases of problems before the American people, the Institute of Public Affairs is coming more and more to fill a real place and to attract attention far beyond the bounds of Virginia. The institution Thomas Jefferson founded and dedicated to freedom of thought is an ideal place for holding such full and free discussions of these matters in which the American people are interested.—**Roanoke (Va.) News,** Aug. 19, 1929.

CURRENT OPINION.

* * * Officials and sponsors of the Institute are to be warmly congratulated upon the unquestionable success of the undertaking. It has grown in size and in usefulness every year, and we predict that next year, it will attract even more international attention than was the case this year, and the latter was sufficient to be really flattering.—**Newport News (Va.) Press,** August 21, 1929.

GOOD WORK BY THE COLLEGES.

* * * The two institutes (Williams College and University of Virginia) have sufficiently proved that their object is not to pro-

mote any cause but to serve the truth. It is a heartening circumstance that they have been able to win an increasing measure of public attention and respect. — **New York World**, August 22, 1929, copied from **St. Louis Post-Dispatch.**

VIRGINIA'S FREE FORUM.

* * * To the **Virginian Pilot** it seems clear that public affairs institutes of the kind that are conducted at Williams College and the University of Virginia are in a most important sense worth while. Moreover, no other agencies in American life are better suited for their sponsorship than the colleges and universities. Between the free forum and the institution of learning dedicated to the pursuit of truth wherever it may lead, there is a natural and obvious affinity. Of the public usefulness of the institute there can be no reasonable doubt. There is needed in our social scheme an intellectual Hyde Park where men and women holding diverse and even radically opposed views of our public affairs may speak their minds and propose their remedies, even if some of the remedies seem realizable only in distant Utopias. The indispensable condition of such a public forum is that it must be drastically free and untrammeled. In sponsoring such a forum for the discussion of our domestic affairs, the University of Virginia is performing a valuable national service. — **Norfolk (Va.) Virginian Pilot,** August 22, 1929.

INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

* * * The Institute of Public Affairs attracted more attention this year than ever before. It renders a distinct service to America and it is destined to grow.—**Wilmington (Del.) Every Evening,** August 22, 1929.

A NATIONAL FORUM.

When C. Bascom Slemp, in conjunction with Dean Charles G. Maphis, suggested several years ago an annual Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, for the non-partisan discussion of national problems, the idea was hailed throughout the country as an excellent one. It seemed appropriate, too, that the institute should be established at the Charlottesville school, for here the spirit of Thomas Jefferson, one of the ablest political thinkers of any age, is all-pervading. In such an atmosphere one is obliged to meet the problems of the moment with a frank, open mind, bent only upon their solution without regard to the personal equation. Jefferson was a great liberal; before his spirit narrowness and meanness of thought are bound to quail.

But while the idea of the institute was hailed universally as an excellent one, few, even among those who embraced it enthusiastically, dreamed that the institute would be established so firmly as it has been in so brief a time, nor prove to be a national forum of such consequence and influence. It has been a sudden and marvelous development. One wonders now why this clearing house of thought was not fashioned years and years ago. It fills a distinct need in the national life. Its annual sessions are regarded throughout the country as events of the very first importance. Great newspapers of the East send their star reporters there, and the press associations load the wires with accounts of the institute discussions. Even Congress itself is not more fully "covered."

The institute has attracted to itself the ablest men of America. Some of them are not in public life, and their voices seldom would be heard in the absence of some such forum as this. Yet their speeches and debates are tremendously important contributions to

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the political thought of the time. The country is vastly richer for their having spoken. These men have found in the institute a medium for the distribution of their views to the far corners of the United States—a medium which heretofore they have lacked. They are now playing the parts in the national life which they should have played long ago in the interest of the public welfare.

The atmosphere of the institute is conducive to free thinking and free speaking. There is no air of restraint, such as one finds in official bodies. Opinions are expressed frankly and fully without regard to political consequences. Speakers feel that they can say just what is on their minds. There are no constituencies to which they must be beholden, no fixed policies which they must respect. The institute was established for the purpose of getting at the real truth of things, not for glossing over any facts in a given case, however cold and brutal they may be. It is a clearing house of information, rather than a political institution, where men tread cautiously and speak softly. That is the strength of it; that is the secret of its tremendous importance in the life of the country.

The institute already is the national forum. As the years go on, it will continue to grow as an important factor in the national life.—**Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch,** August 23, 1929.

TWO INSTITUTES

* * * The American public has become vastly interested in the idea, which may be accepted as a splendid example of educational progress. Williams and the University of Virginia are giving university extension courses free to the public, on subjects of vast human interest.—**Pawtucket (R. I.) Times,** August 26, 1929.